

SMITE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE



INSIDE: HISTORY OF THE HINDU, SMITE SEASON 3: DUEL REVIEW & MORE!

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BATTLEGROUND OF THE GODS

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From The Editorial Staff

Hello everyone and welcome to the SMITE Official Magazine. If this is your first time reading, a double welcome to you! The SMITE Official Magazine is a community project turned Official Hi-Rez product. All the content you see here is created by people that love the game and are members of the community the same as you. As you might have guessed, #22 means there are 21 other issues to browse through, and I invite you to do so at www.gameonmag.com/smite.

This month we take a look at all the changes that took place after the SWC when Season 3 hit the live servers, including an in-depth review into the newly renamed Duel game mode by none other than Nicholas 'NShadow' Scotti! We also take a look at the newest addition to the game mode roster: Clash.

Speaking of the new Joust/Duel map, this month's Diary of ... is all about the Bull Demon King and his adventures with the gods and goddesses of SMITE. As Valentine's Day and the Lunar New Year just passed us, we couldn't leave those out! Though the Valisblot story might be a little bit ... different.

We're keeping the human interest going with our monthly look into our staff members, and fans of the Anxiety piece we featured last month aren't going to be disappointed this time around as we're featuring a little look into how SMITE affected the life of yours truly.

So sit back, relax and enjoy this month's issue of the SMITE Official Magazine!

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SANCTUARY

be invulnerable to damage for 2s.

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SEASON 3: THE CHANGES

By Thomas Shaw



Season 3 is finally among us, introducing a variety of changes in terms of items, Actives/Relics, god balance and map changes. Today, I'm going to be taking a look over the important changes so you are all caught up.

The most 'obvious' change is to Actives, being renamed to Relics. Along with a different name, the way Relics work also changed, with you no longer having to spend gold to acquire a Relic. You now can get a Relic from the beginning of the game and when you hit Level 12. The Relics are generally the same to what you saw in Season 2 Actives, with some being nerfed and replaced. An example is Purification (formerly known as Purification

Beads), which has its CC immunity changed to be 2s with a 140 second cooldown. Season 3 also introduces some new Relics such as Sunder, which deals true damage based on level. Overall these changes solve the problem of players not picking up actives due to gold, and make it easier for new players to learn their way through the game.

Items got massively changed. A lot of items got changed in terms of the stats they give, as well as their passive. On top of this a variety of new items were introduced as well. One of the most notable trends among the item changes is the 'specialization' of defensive items. No longer does nearly everything give health besides protections,

with health now being a separate tree to build into. Another important things to note are that CDR (cooldown reduction) is no longer as easy to get to the cap, and a new stat is introduced: CCR (crowd control reduction) Below I'm going to list a few items which got changed/introduced in a significant way.

- Sovereignty/Heartward - Sovereignty and Heartward were very often considered to be the core of all support builds. Offering defence for yourself and your allies. In the Season 3 patch it received a decrease in protections, making it less viable in comparison to other items such as Breastplate, which gives good stats cheap.
- Soul Eater - Soul Eater became a prominent item for hunters, making them tanky while also providing lifesteal. Now, it no longer provides health, and gives back health when you take damage below 50% restores. This is reliant on stacks, making it a decent item, but not one that will be realistically stacked enough to be worth it.
- Spear of Desolation - Lots of power, Penetration, and a passive which lowers cooldowns if you get a kill. This is a significantly strong item ticking all the boxes a mage needs. It shines the most in teamfights due to the passive, meaning that if you are in the lead you are likely to continue doing so.
- Doom Orb - Doom Orb was a item that was never really picked up in Season 2 due to its uncertainty to get value for gold. In the Season 3 patch it's been changed to stack off minions, making it one of the best items in the game. It offers

a lot of power for a cheap price, and gives a large amount of snowball potential.

God balance was not as focused on as it was at the start of Season 2. A lot of the gods that were changed only got smaller nerfs or buffs. Like above I'm going to highlight some of the significant changes in terms of god balance.

- Ao Kuang - Ao Kuang has at points been one of the strongest gods in the game, and right now it's beginning to show again. His base stats were increased, along with items such as Polynomicon being buffed. With all this, it makes Ao Kuang have much more of an impact in the game, being able to dish out high damage no matter the time in the game, while also improving his late-game even more.
- Xing Tian - Xing Tian was one of the strongest gods in Season 2, being picked/banned every





game at the SMITE World Championship. He had a strong presence in teamfights, and could dish out Crowd Control in a fight. To try and lower his performance, his cooldowns were increased, along with changing his root on his 2 to a slow. This seems small, but a change in CC can matter quite a bit. Unlike before Xing's support is considerably weaker, being one of the worse supports in the game. His Solo is still strong, but not as strong as before.

- Janus - Another god with a strong showing in Season 2. Unlike Xing Janus was not hit as hard, reducing his Passive damage increase. This change impacts his performance, but not by a considerable amount.
- Khepri - Khepri had one of the craziest ban rates in Season 2, and had a really strong showing in casuals and ranked. He received some nerfs, and once again in Season 3 this continued. His Abduct





duration decreased, and the range on Scarab's blessing decreased. Small nerfs, but just more to make him less potent.

And last but not least is map changes. The conquest map received an update to make the map overall more open, as well as make it less farm orientated for Junglers. To do this they removed 2 buffs from the map, taking away the Movement Speed and Attack Speed buffs. To fill up some of the space left on the map, small xp camps were added with boars, as well as small fire elementals that also offer small amounts of xp. This overall makes it easier for Junglers to gank, as they clear up the jungle much faster.

The joust map got a complete redesign in terms of looks and gameplay, taking on the Chinese theme to make a new aesthetic experience. When it comes to gameplay the map only has one large side jungle now, along with a Fire Giant equivalent, the Bull Demon King. The Bull Demon King gives you a less potent Fire Giant-like buff for a short duration, which also applies a debuff which stops the enemy's next objective from attacking (towers and phoenixes only, does not apply to the Titan.) This makes the problem of Tower or Phoenix camping nearly non-existent, as the safety it provides can be disabled somewhere else on the map. The map itself is also longer, with the center of the lane being noticeably larger. This makes it easier to use tactics such as zoning and allows for more ganks in lane.

Overall, Season 3 brings a lot of changes to the game and completely changes up the experience, and all of them are here to stay for at least another year.

By Thomas Shaw



SMITE SEASON 3: DUEL REVIEW

~~~~~ By Nicholas 'NShadow' Scotti ~~~~~

With much anticipation came the newest updated map to SMITE, featured on both 3v3 Joust and the newly named 1v1 game mode, "Duel". Unlike past map updates, this one featured an entirely new style to Joust/Duel overall, as its design is based entirely off of the Chinese pantheon. Along with this graphical overhaul came some very interesting tactical changes to the map, shaping a new strategy for the otherwise simplistic

game modes. The addition of a Fire Giant-like "Bull King", the reduction of jungle buffs, and more centralized objectives make the general gameplay on this map much more aggressive. However, with this calculated change to the previous meta of Duel, many of the same jarring problems exist within competitive play. Hi-Rez is working diligently to provide some sort of balanced state for the game mode, and has been extremely responsive





with community feedback thus far, but is Duel truly a mode deserving a ranking system?

The intention of adding the Bull to Duel was to promote a more proactive playstyle where games could be decided more quickly due to leads being more solidified with the reward of a game-changing buff which disables the next available structure, allowing you to safely take down objectives and press your lead. In old Joust 1v1, your opponent could simply roam the map farming the various jungle buffs and safely clearing waves with minimal threat of the enemy ending the game off of an early to mid-game lead. As long as you selected a late-game god such as the various higher tier Hunters, a few of the highest scaling/kiting Mages, or a hyper-carry with backdoor potential, you could ensure yourself a win against any lesser god. This made for a very stale gamemode as, unless you picked one of those select few late-game gods, you were unable to compete with them toward the end-game, no matter how large of a lead you could establish, assuming your opponent knew how to play it correctly.

The reduction of the number of buffs and inclusion of the Bull was meant to counter this strategy, and in a way it did. Certain Assassins have

much more viability now because of their ability to snowball a deserved lead, and can generally turn that lead into a relatively early Bull buff for themselves. However, no Assassin is nearly as dominant as a higher-tier Hunter in this gamemode, for they have the ability not only to outbox an opponent at nearly all stages of the game, but also to out-clear and dominate buff control. Not to mention, with the inclusion of lifesteal or crit in a Hunter's build, they can take the Bull down with much greater ease than nearly any other god. On top of that, the Season 3 item changes aimed at balancing Conquest have completely marred the potential to defeat Hunters with almost any sort of Mage, with the exception of self-sustaining, high burst carries such as Sol or Freya. The inaccessibility of Health in a Mage vs a physical's build is crippling, and leads to easy comebacks for Hunters the later the game goes, as the Hunter can simply build a Bulwark to gain a tremendous amount of health and defense in one defensive item.

Additionally, while the concept of the Bull King buff was apt, its application in-game falters. For certain gods, such as Warriors, Guardians, and







many Mages, taking down the Bull King is extremely difficult, and the game mode's short respawn timers almost never allow you to secure it without the use of some sort of crit/lifesteal in your build. Obviously this is detrimental to overall balance, as only certain gods (who happen to be the same gods already dominating every other aspect of this mode) can afford to build those stats, or even have the ability to do so based on their role. Therefore, even higher burst Guardians such as Cabrakan or Ymir are often unable to secure the buff off of a considerable lead. In response to this oversight, Hi-Rez lowered the starting health of the Bull King, making it a bit more accessible. Unfortunately, while the change did help these early-game gods establish and sustain more of a lead, the itemization and kits of the hyper-carries

almost always allow them to hang in long enough to come online before you can end the game. While the Bull buff does disable structures, it does not affect the titan, and with the power buff that the Bull used to grant you being removed in the latest patch, on top of the game mode's unrewarding respawn timers, sieging someone's Titan with these early-mid game centric gods becomes next to impossible.

While the replacement of actives with relics makes for a dynamic alteration to the Conquest meta, the longer cooldowns on relics, coupled with the inaccessibility of health in builds against physicals render many squishier, kite-based Mages entirely defenseless against the aggression of Assassins such as Kali and Bastet.





This polarization of the Hunter/hypercarry meta in Season 3 Duel leads to even less diversity in the gamemode. Hi-Rez did try to provide a failsafe in case of this sort of development by adding one more ban per player in Duel this season, but unfortunately it's just not enough to keep all of these dominant gods out. Thus, once again we're left with a gamemode that determines the winner in the picking phase (providing two players of relatively equal skill are against each other), unless both players are committed to selecting only within this extremely small pool of gods. While conforming to this meta is clearly the only choice to ensure wins against players around equal skill level, it creates even more problems for the competitive viability of the mode, and deters the general SMITE player base from partaking in it quite substantially.

The questions remains: no matter how receptive Hirez continues to be about Duel feedback, will the gamemode ever achieve a state of competitive viability with the general balance and creation of gods based solely on performance in a 5v5 MOBA? Certain classes of gods can clearly never see success when they are designed for team fighting purposes, and gods that excel in extended boxing engagements will always thrive. Without treating Duel as its own separate entity with its own separate god, item and relic balancing can never truly be fixed. With these glaring issues, is there a real reason to continue considering this gamemode a competitive one?

*By Nicholas 'NShadow' Scotti*





# CLASHING IN CLASH

~~~~~ By Jorg van der Velden ~~~~~

Beta tested on the PTS throughout November 2015 and permanently joining the roster of game modes in the following December, Clash is SMITE's latest addition to the game's already impressive variety of maps. I'm here to talk you through the game mode, to let you know what it's about, how it works and what to look out for when butting heads in this high paced game mode!

THE MODE

As a quick look at the map might suggest, Clash is what happens when Conquest and Arena go on a date together and 'things happen' under the moonlight. It attempts to merge the high action team fighting of Arena with the objective focus of Conquest to provide a middle ground between the game modes.

This design philosophy is very visible in the map design. There's a sizable central area that works and feels like the Arena map and stimulates a lot of team fighting. The fact that the only red buff on the map is placed smack-dab in the middle of this ensures the teams will 'Clash' over and over again. The other objectives, Fire Giant, Gold Fury and blue buffs, are easily accessible from this central area, spread over two smaller 'Arenas' at the sides. The Harpies are placed in a miniature jungle on each team's side of the map, resulting in two additional small 'Arenas'. The map's two lanes each feature a Tower and a Phoenix per team, with the Titan skewed to the defending team's left lane and the fountain positioned at the start of the team's right lane.

The asymmetry immediately creates an interesting dynamic in the game, as one lane is naturally more important than the other. Losing a

tower in the lane that ends closest to your Titan feels incredibly crippling, while you're not nearly as worried about losing a tower in the other lane. However, clearing the objectives in the 'weaker' lane is an incredibly effective way of applying pressure to the opposing team, creating more space for your team to take the Tower in the 'Titan lane'.

The reason I described the map as various arenas is because it really helps to think of the game in that way: five arenas with two lanes snaking between them. While there are objectives present in these arenas, they're either easy to clear or easy to avoid, allowing for teamfighting to take place relatively unimpeded. A closer look at the map also reveals that there are only two direct entrances to 'tower safety' from these areas, placed at the very back of the Harpy jungles on each side of the map. All other entrances to the arenas allow enemies to walk through without the risk of getting Tower aggro (being target by the Tower/Phoenix), though in some places this is a really tight squeeze. As a result, there are very few places where you're safe.

With how small the map is, having 5 players on it makes for a very hectic and high paced game, never granting you a moment's rest. Even just backing to base is a risky endeavour at the best of times, as you always have to be prepared for a big rotation from the enemy.



UNIQUELY PACED

While the game is a hybrid between Conquest and Arena, it has its very own identity and feel. Like arena, the entire team starts at level 3 with 1500 gold to spend. Even though the map has lanes, you'll spend most of your time teamfighting, so you need to spend your skill points as you would in Arena. On the other hand, the two lanes make builds that incorporate stacking items like Transcendence or Warlock's Sash a lot easier to pull off, allowing for multiple people to go for these types of items without the conflict that usually happens in Arena.

However, there is one very important thing to take into account: the gold and experience spooling. Arena has extremely elevated base gold and experience income, letting people gain levels really fast and gold is rarely if ever a worry. Clash's gold spooling is only slightly higher than Conquest's (6 gold per second) and has no base experience spooling. As a result, you actually need to farm in one way or another to get the gold and experience you need to be relevant in the match. The amount of gold and experience available on the Clash map is significantly lower than on the Conquest map though, so farming and getting everything you need to be relevant is a lot harder. And this greatly affects the strategies and gods that work in this game mode, giving it its unique feeling and pacing.



STRATEGIES

With this uniqueness and blend between Arena and Conquest, there's a couple of strategies available that you can push to their limits more than you could in any other game mode. But before I dive into those, some general info about gods and items is in order.

Like I mentioned before, the amount of gold and experience available is very limited, so gods with very cost effective builds really shine. They can miss out on a wave or two and rotate back and forth more than gods that require more expensive items in their builds. Even some gods like Freya, who have a cost effective start but dip into very expensive items later on, can work well because they can start their snowball earlier, relying on getting kills in the teamfighting later on to gather the gold for the more expensive items.

This also means that early-game gods are very effective, as their early power allows them to

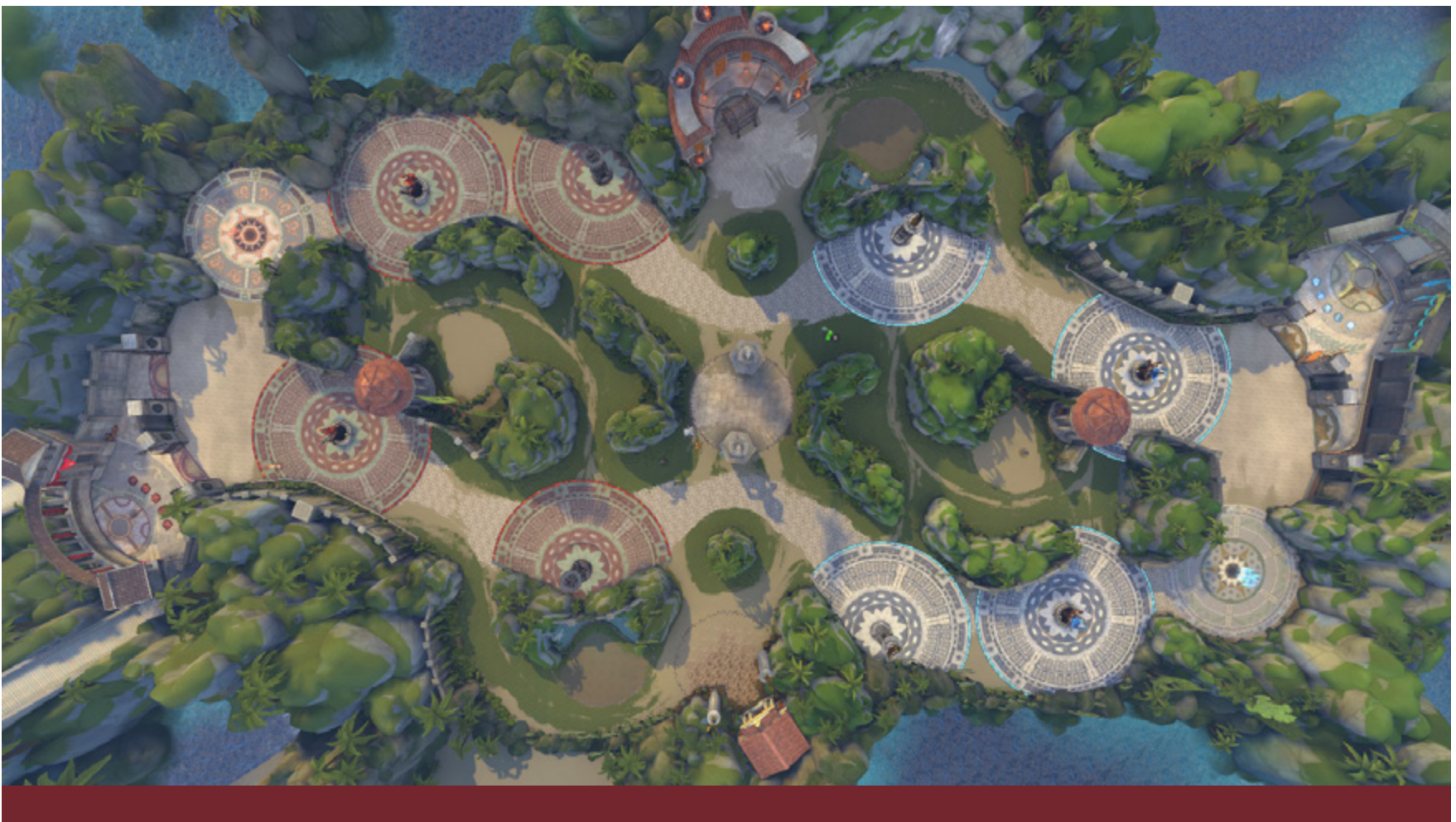
snowball quickly off of the first couple of teamfights and retain their lead throughout the game based off of this. The risk is a lot bigger though, because if the early fights don't work out for them, they have a hard time getting back into it and be relevant later on.

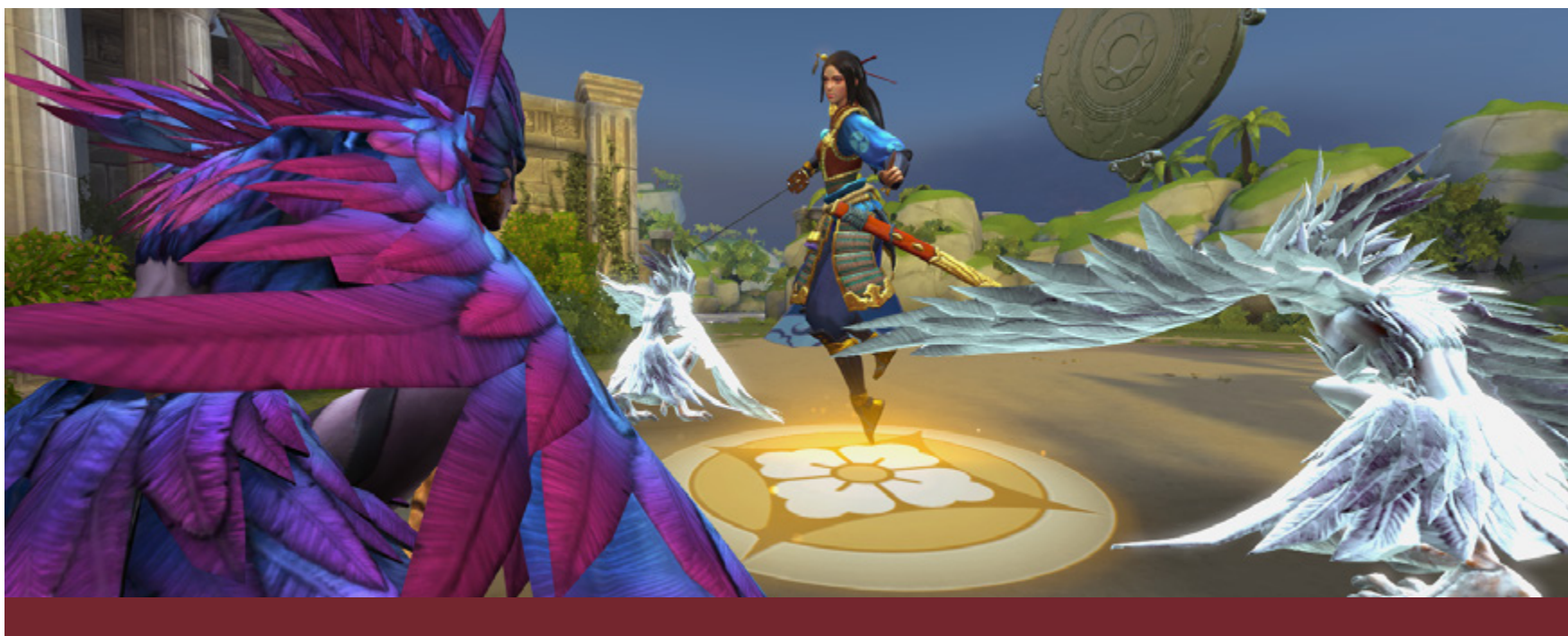
That said, a lot of the game mode is about teamfighting, so gods that have strong presence in those are generally preferred. This also means that gods that have a weak teamfighting capability are at a distinct disadvantage, with a few distinct exceptions. Gods like Loki, that have almost no teamfight presence but can burst down a single target faster than you can blink, do have a place in some strategies.

Speaking of, let's get into those!

Circles, Circles Everywhere!

This is a team composition most are familiar with: a balanced team with a lot of (ranged) AoE (Area of Effect) abilities. This means classics like the Cupid - Odin - Zeus ult combo or gods like





Kukulcan, Kumbhakarna and Poseidon. Because of the relatively small arenas the map consists of, it's even easier to lock down opponents and hit them with some serious damage. Ymir is also a good god for for this comp, as he can block off exits with his wall and create even less space for the enemy to move in. Eventually you'll create so much space that you can take the opponent's Towers and Phoenixes, though it might take a while as it requires creating space under the Tower, throw out a couple of attacks and back off again.

Eternal Split-push

This strategy has one core purpose, but two distinct approaches to it. As the name implies, it's about having someone try and split-push as much as possible. This means you need at least one god that can do this effectively, Apollo for example. But because of the smaller map, the rotational power that is required doesn't need to be as ridiculously strong as it would be in Conquest. Being able to push and escape safely is more important than being able to get to your team fast, because the enemy rotations can be fast and vicious.

The two distinct approaches are as follows: one dedicated split-pusher with the rest of the

team consisting of tanky fighters able to delay the opposing team with CC (Crowd Control) or multiple gods capable of taking a Tower quickly. For the first approach, gods like Bellona, Amaterasu and CC heavy Guardians like Athena or Bacchus are instrumental as they can delay the enemy's rotations for a very long time, allowing the split pusher to get away and reposition themselves for the next split-push. The second one usually incorporates Assassins like Mercury or Ne Zha that can take Towers in seconds or Mages like Chronos or Sol that do the same. This removes the need to rotate, as a Hunter can stick in one lane and the Assassin/Mage in the other, keeping constant pressure on both lanes at all times. Strangely, burst gods like Loki have a place in these as well, as they can eliminate a threat quickly, creating more space for the split-pushers. This does tend to weaken the teamfight capabilities of the team, so be wary of that.

Objective Control

This strategy focuses completely around the control of the Gold Fury and the Fire Giant and relies on those to win. To accomplish this you need two types of gods: those that create an advantageous situation so you can take the objective safely and those that can secure the objectives quickly and efficiently. This

is where burst gods like Loki or Serqet shine, as they can take out the opponents with the greatest potential of stealing the objective quickly, creating a 4v5 situation in which the objective can be taken safely. Scylla, Ra and Kukulcan are great picks for securing the objective, as they have some of the highest damaging burst ults in the game. Even the relic Wrath has a place in this composition, as it gives that extra bit of oomph while securing the objective in question.

Don't be afraid of giving up a little during the early game when employing this strategy. Losing some gold to the Tower is no problem as it will be compensated by the gold provided by the Gold Fury. Losing one of your Towers is also acceptable, as long as you take care not to let the enemy snowball too hard off of that.

Pandemonium

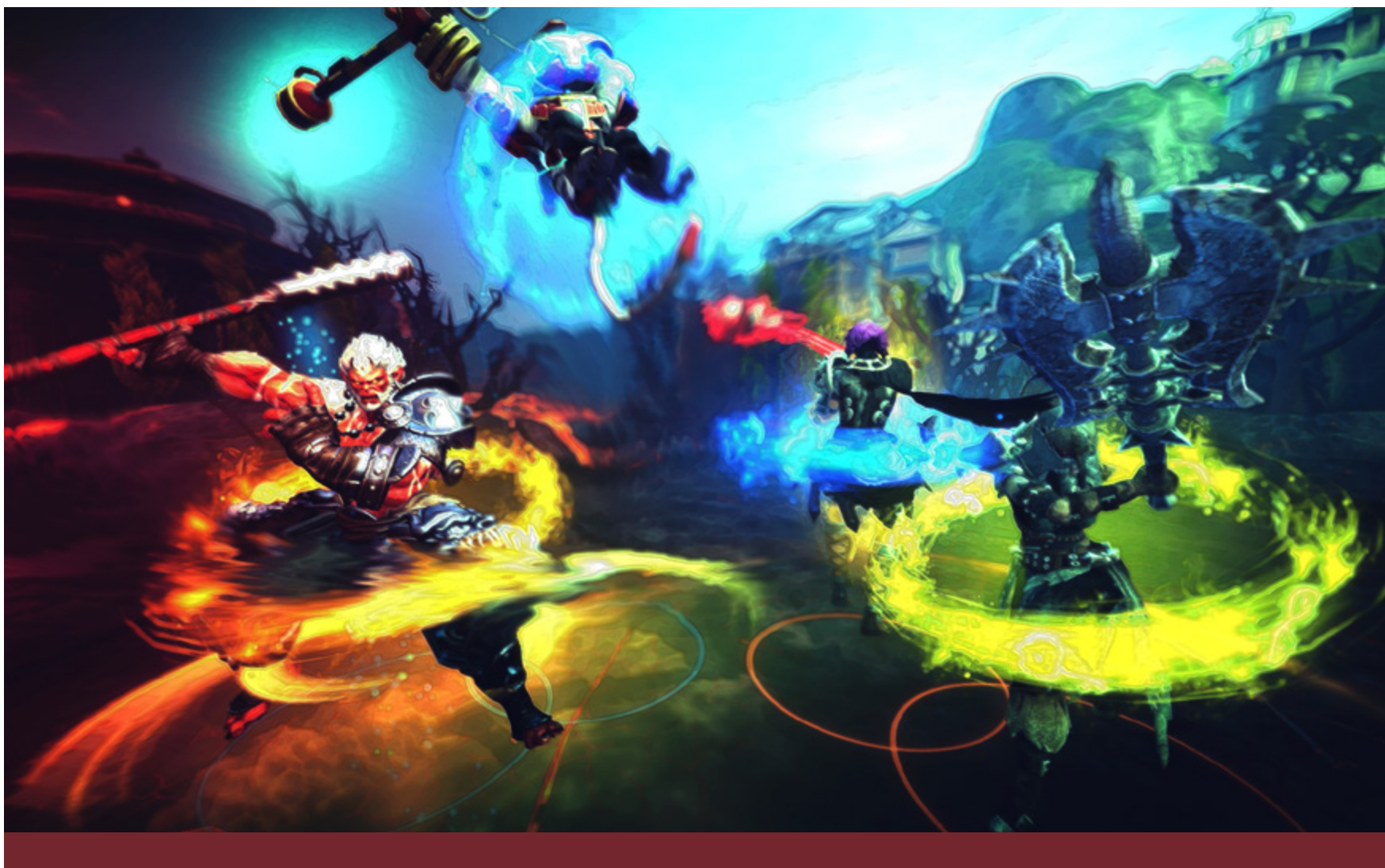
The single most straightforward strategy: never stop teamfighting, never give the enemy

a moment's rest and take objectives only as an afterthought. This is essentially playing Arena on the wrong map, and the same gods that are strong in that game mode are strong in this strategy. The only difference being that you need two gods with decent wave clear instead of one, preferably with a single ability so they can drop those on the move to the fight or quickly move out of the fight to clear and return within seconds. The biggest drawback of this is the lack of flexibility that comes with it. The other strategies can shift their purpose in lesser or greater degree once the game starts while Pandemonium is a commitment during the picks.

I've grown to love the game mode a lot as I played it for this piece, and is currently my second favorite mode! I hope this introduction (and mini-guide) got you interested if you haven't tried it yet, or helps you enjoy it even more if you're already a fan.

By Jorg van der Velden





DIARY OF ... THE BULL DEMON KING

~~~~~ By Timothy Tian ~~~~~

Dear Diary,

It's the Lunar New Year! I've been waiting for this day since...well, the last Lunar New Year. Reunions, gifts, and, best of all, food! The dumplings cousin Minotaur made last year were absolutely scrumptious. My tummy is rumbling thinking of them right now. Unfortunately, this year isn't the same. Ever since I got this job (guarding this red coloured buff), things haven't been as easy. Work has been piling up ever since I got here. Day and night, I clock in and take my position in this camp. I have to admit though, this is a nice camp. Spacious and comfortable, unlike the ones I see everyday on my way here. That's not the point, dear diary. The

point is, it's the new year and instead of being out, celebrating with my family, I'm being held back in this metaphorical cage. I call this place a cage because my job scope involves me remaining in this camp at all times. Trying to get out is out of the question. Cousin Minotaur once told me that he did it a few times back when he was working here. He believes that that move actually cost him his job. Anyway, back to the point I was talking about, I'm stuck here, on the first day of Chinese New Year. This new location that I'm stationed in reminds me a lot of home, too. Not helping at all. Oh well, nothing I can do about it now. I guess I should be making the best out of the situation. Be right back, I hear footsteps up ahead.



Dear Diary,

The footsteps have come and gone. Nothing much to worry about just yet. It's a good thing I'm a lot bigger than everyone I've met here. These gods do not have good intentions whenever I meet them. It seems that this buff I guard is valuable to them. Honestly, they can just have it. I don't feel like putting up a fight today. My heart isn't here at all. My heart is with those Mandarin oranges that I love so much. Since I'm going to be at this camp for quite awhile, I should plant that orange tree here. I could get some shade from the Sun and Ra. Plus, I could have a snack when all the action is going on out there. Yes, it's a great idea. I'll just leave a little reminder over here:

PLANT MANDARIN ORANGE TREE

Dear Diary,

As always, here's some information on the fight that's going on right now. On my left, the team consists of Neith, Sol and Sobek. At least, I think it's Sobek. He looks a little different from what I remember. He must be working out recently, trying to get buff. Is that a broken signboard in his hand? I always thought he carried an axe. Either way, it's a good look for him. On my right, there's Loki, Poseidon and Ymir. Ymir looks a little different too. He doesn't seem as edgy today. Is everyone working out now? I'd better keep up with them, can't get left behind with the latest trends. Back to the fight, there doesn't seem to be much of that going on just yet. From what I can see, they seem to be really passive. Oh wait, Loki just went invisible, that always results in something. I'll get







back to you soon dear diary. Wouldn't want to miss this piece of trickery from the Trickster God himself.

Dear Diary,

I'm back a lot sooner than I thought I would be. I couldn't really tell what happened from all the way back here. For a moment, he disappeared and the next, he was back again at his original location. It's too bad nothing happened. Kills usually mean more time for me to relax. They would never approach me for a 1v1 situation, they always come as a full team. Nothing to see out there right now. Where were we again? Oh yes, Lunar New Year. I should probably tell you about the zodiac and what lies ahead for me this year. That way, we'll be able to compare them with the actual results at the end of this year and put an end to the same question every year...are horoscopes for real? Let's see, I was born in the year of the Ox. Hmm...according to this article, I'm going to be showered in an abundance of happiness and wealth. Sounds good to me! Not so good in the 'romance' department though. I'd better put off talking to Aphrodite this year then. Next year will be the right one.



Dear Diary,

A short update on the game. More passive plays. The score is tied at 0-0. There seems to be a lot of planning going on. Not much fighting. According to Cousin Minotaur, they don't make fights like they used to. I hope they come my way soon. I'm all ready to strut my stuff.

Dear Diary,

They should be attacking each other soon. I can tell from their body language. They're approaching one another, almost brushing shoulders





Artwork by MeesterChair







right now. Boom! Hmm...nothing? More chit chat. What is going on? This has got to be the weirdest fight I've seen so far during my time here. Instead of planning among their own teammates, the two teams seem to be planning with each other right now. Their heads are turning and they're looking towards my direction, all six of them. They're going to attack me together as one big team? Well, that's a first. I'd better get ready then. See you later, dear diary.

Dear Diary,

I have my weapon in my hand now. Slowly but surely, they're heading my way. I'd better prepare for the worst. I've never had to face six all at once before. This is going to be a brutal fight.

Dear Diary,

They're here. Right outside my camp. No one is making a single move. They're all just there, standing





as still as after Medusa shows her face. What are they waiting for? This confusion is killing me. Wait, Neith is making a move. I'm going to put you down for a sec... Wait a minute, is that a lantern? Ymir is making his move now and...another lantern? One by one, they're releasing lanterns to the sky. There's six of them now, floating above their heads. They're smiling at me.

Dear Diary,

This has been one the best Chinese New Year celebration ever! Not only did they bring food, they invited the other gods to my camp for the celebration as well! We danced, we joked and we laughed. At the end of the day, we all released our lanterns to the sky.

Cousin Minotaur also made a surprise appearance. It seems that he planned the whole thing. That was really nice of him and the gods too! I guess they're not so bad after all. The celebration lasted the entire day. I'm all pooped out right now. The last of the gods are leaving the camp as I'm writing this to you. I'll see you soon dear diary. I've got to catch up with Chang'e, I've been trying to strike up a conversation with her all evening. I'll let you know how it goes later on. Forget the horoscope for now. Man must make their own opportunities. For now, Happy Chinese New Year! May the new year bring us wealth, health and prosperity!

*By Timothy Tian*



# TYING THE CONNECTIONS: SUN WUKONG

By Devon Boyette



Everyone loves the Monkey King, and aside from being an enduring character in Chinese mythology even into modern times, Sun Wukong's influence has spread to pop culture, including various books, movies, and video games--such as Smite, as well as other MOBAs. His character even influenced that of Goku from the original Dragonball, as well as it's famous sequel series. But where do his abilities come from, and how accurate are they? Luckily, I can answer that. But first some background.

There's far too much story to distill into an article of any size, but according to mythology, and the famed (and much later) Journey to the West, Wukong was born of a stone on top of a mountain. There, he soaked up the sun and Heaven's powers for hundreds or even thousands of years. When the earth

and air combined, the wind formed the stone into a monkey, who glowed with divine power. Appearance-wise, he was said to be as monkey as any other, but 'fully formed', with all of his limbs and a tail.

His most famous story, the aforementioned Journey, sees Wukong on a bound quest to aid the scholar monk Xuanzang on a journey to retrieve sacred writings. This actually tells the story of Wukong's birth into divinity, and his strongest powers, but most of his Smite abilities come from earlier myths. These tales usually involving him causing trouble for Heaven, and eventually lead to him fighting off all of the armies of Heaven before finally being granted a title--just before Buddha imprisons him under a mountain for his impertinence.



With his stolen immortality, his self-made fortunes and skills, and hundreds of years spent studying fighting and magic, it's no surprise that 'Sun Wu-Kong', one of the most devoted and determined beings in Chinese mythology, made it into Heaven. Thereafter, he was known as the Victorious Fighting Buddha, representing his unparalleled fighting ability.

## UNDEFEATED BODY

As for his role, Sun Wukong is a pivotal warrior. He was known to have many spells, including the ability to freeze the body of any opponent, or make himself fireproof. However, his life was a fight from start to finish, filled with the bravery and strength needed to face gods and demons in combat. Warrior is exactly where he needs to be.

Aside from that, his passive, Undefeated Body, is somewhat indicative of his tough-to-kill nature. Unable to really be bested in any fight across his entire lengthy life, Wukong's skill in combat kept him from being finished off even in dire circumstances. Getting low in Smite won't help you recover, but it might save your life, with bonus protections and critical hit chance for SWK during these times. The crit may or may not help you in the end, though the saves it provides are glorious indeed. But getting extra protections can only help, and this alone has saved many a Wukong player in rough fights.







Artwork by Maria Manrique Ccopa



## THE MAGIC CUDGEL/MASTER'S WILL

Perhaps Wukong's most well-known artifact is his extendable staff, one of the most iconic weapons across Chinese mythology, if not all mythology. Desiring a weapon worthy of his youthful pride, Wukong traveled to the seas, and found Ruyi Jingu Bang. It was nothing more than a magical rod of powerful use once set in place to measure and pacify the oceans of the world. Jingu Bang glowed on Sun Wukong's approach, signifying to him, and presumably itself, that it had found a master, and he, a weapon.

The staff, previously claimed as a treasure of Ao Kuang, was able to transform its size and shape unlimitedly, make copies of itself, or fight according to Wukong's will. Above all else it was several tons in weight, yet could still be concealed on Wukong as nothing more than a needle. Its loss threw the seas into turmoil, and led to SWK fighting Ao Kuang and the other dragons of the seas, whom Wukong also claimed 'gifts' from in tribute.

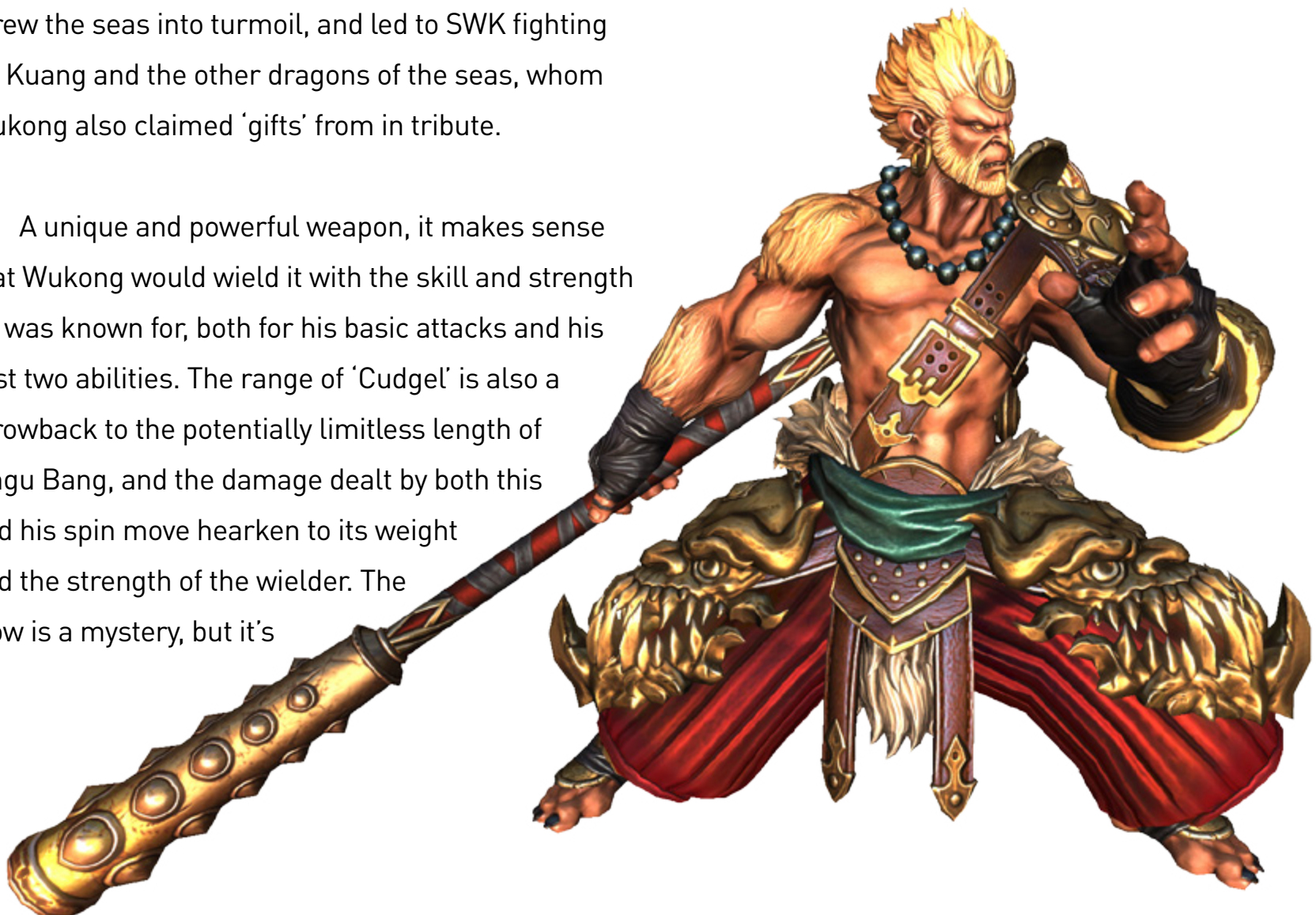
A unique and powerful weapon, it makes sense that Wukong would wield it with the skill and strength he was known for, both for his basic attacks and his first two abilities. The range of 'Cudgel' is also a throwback to the potentially limitless length of Jingu Bang, and the damage dealt by both this and his spin move hearken to its weight and the strength of the wielder. The slow is a mystery, but it's

possible this is a reference to Wukong's ability to use magic to impede the movement of others, including gods, through magic learned in his mortal days.

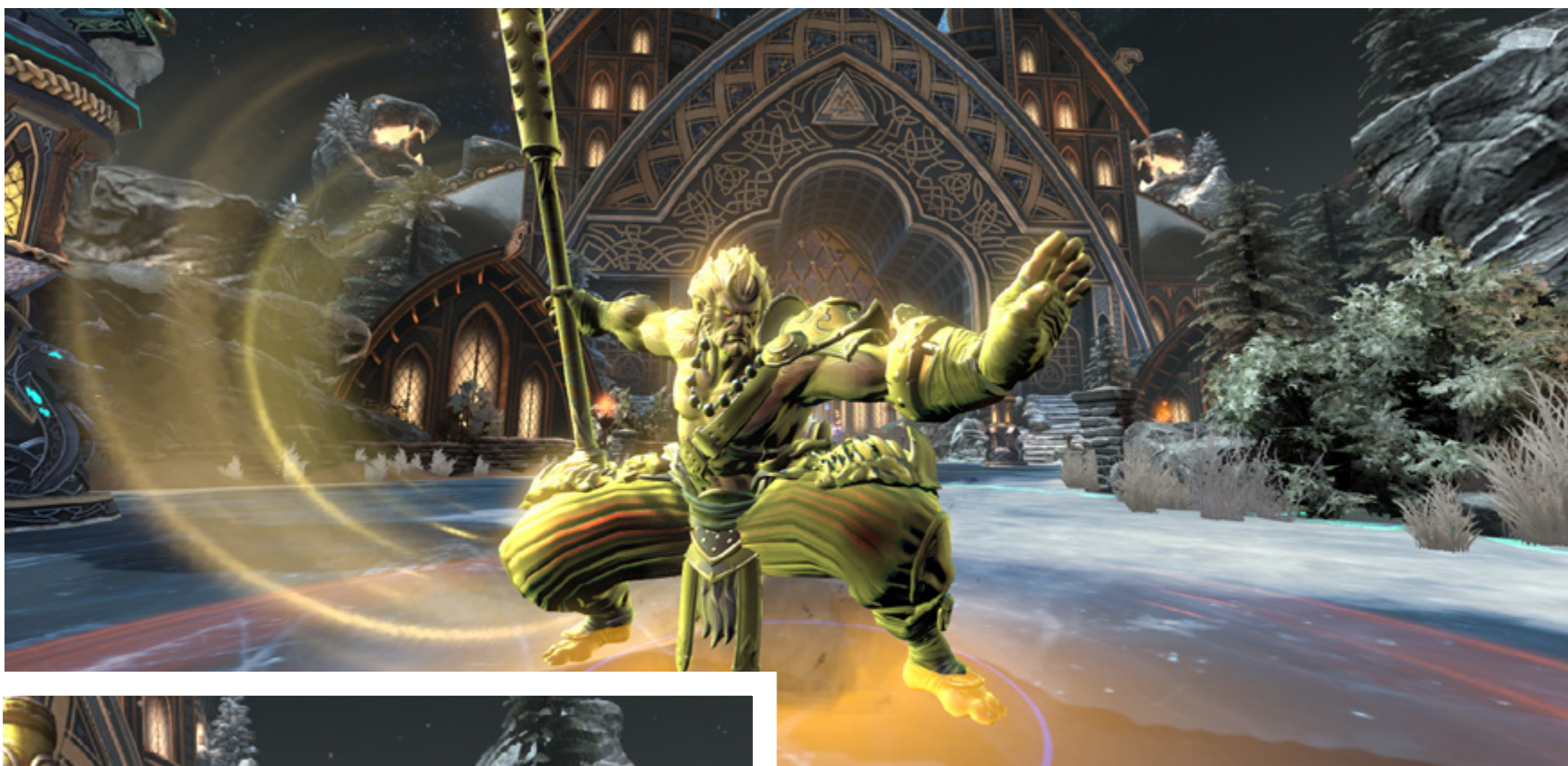
## 72 TRANSFORMATIONS

Wukong's body was able to mimic the shape of any being he had previously seen, from god to demon or even mortal beast. Among these, he was remarked to have 72 transformations that were his strongest, most used, and best-adjusted forms, specifically ones that didn't bother him or mess with his tail. 72 is also an old Buddhist symbol for infinity, or not having limits, perhaps being used as a pun in the old texts. In lore, he could change from the size of a flea to that of a giant, and most if not all things in between, doing so on numerous occasions.

The three forms Sun Wukong manifests in Smite, those of the ox, eagle, and tiger, are all







popular iconic animals in Chinese lore. They make appearances across Buddhist mythology and that of Wukong himself, including the Journey. Each of them also represents strength in some form or another. A more specific reason these three were picked is the way they line up in size. The ox form is the closest to Wukong in aiming, and also the largest, while the eagle is conversely the smallest, fleetest form of the three, and aimed the farthest away.

Nonetheless, the versatility of these forms and the multiple uses Wukong has with this one ability is not only faithful to his lore, but one of the reasons he's maintained a large and consistent fan base among players in Smite.

## SOMERSAULT CLOUD

Wukong's ultimate is where most of his survivability and all of his sustain comes from, along with being another reference to his ancient powers. Sun Wukong was said to be able to use the magic of his fur to change shape, and when a hair was pulled from him, to change that hair's shape,



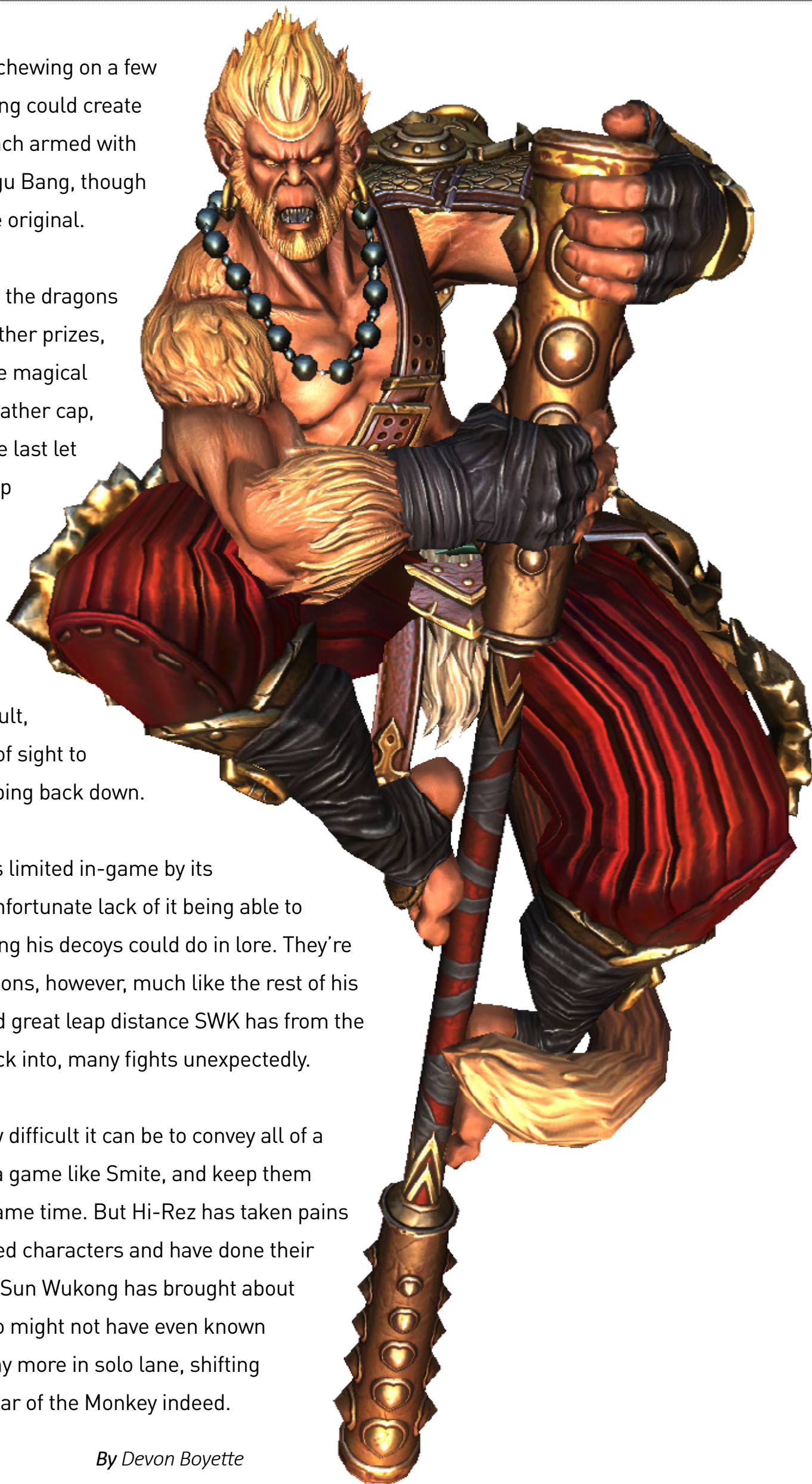
even into a copy of himself. By chewing on a few of his own strands of fur, Wukong could create a veritable legion of himself, each armed with a shadow duplicate of Ruyi Jingu Bang, though neither quite as effective as the original.

In addition, his battles with the dragons of the sea netted him several other prizes, aside from his staff. Those were magical golden chain mail, a phoenix feather cap, and cloud-walking boots. These last let Wukong, who could already leap miles thanks to his Buddhist training, ride on clouds, hide on them, or even dance across them. Wukong uses both this and his ability to create decoys of himself in his ult, where he hides on a cloud out of sight to regain his strength before jumping back down.

The true use of his decoy is limited in-game by its predictable behavior and the unfortunate lack of it being able to transform as he does, something his decoys could do in lore. They're still useful in a variety of situations, however, much like the rest of his kit. And the health recovery and great leap distance SWK has from the cloud can bring him into, or back into, many fights unexpectedly.

In closing, you can see how difficult it can be to convey all of a god's wide range of powers in a game like Smite, and keep them balanced and playable at the same time. But Hi-Rez has taken pains to look at the lore of the included characters and have done their best to be faithful. In this case, Sun Wukong has brought about many more fans to the fold who might not have even known about his history, and kept many more in solo lane, shifting shapes and smashing faces. Year of the Monkey indeed.

*By Devon Boyette*





# IN THEORY: THOTH, GOD OF KNOWLEDGE

By Timothy Tian

*In this edition of In Theory, we take a look at how powerful knowledge can be in a realm where physical prowess reigns supreme through the Egyptian God of Knowledge, Thoth!*

Over the course of Egyptian mythology, there have been countless numbers of deities. Out of all of them, few were as vital as the God of Knowledge, Thoth. His importance was summed up by the fact that he presided over many roles, thus leading to the numerous titles that were associated with him. He was involved in maintaining the universe and also stood next to Ra during their night voyages across the sky. This close relationship with Ra further reinforces his importance since Ra was considered the King of the Gods.

## The Titles of Thoth

- Lord of Ma'at (truth, balance, justice)
- Lord of Divine Words
- Judge of the Two Combatant Gods (referring to Horus and Set)
- The Timeless
- The Pacifier of the Gods

His responsibility as the scribe of the gods also adds another position to his profile. He had a library of scrolls containing information in various branches, most even believing that he was the

author of every branch of knowledge. Being the ruler over scribes, he was also related to the invention of writing, reading and the alphabet themselves.

Based on one of his titles, the Lord of Ma'at, the ancient Egyptians believed that Thoth also presided over Ma'at, which was the idea of truth, balance and justice. Whenever the Egyptian Underworld is mentioned, Anubis is the first god that comes to mind. However, Thoth placed his mark even in this domain. Here, he takes the form of an ape as the god of equilibrium. In this Underworld, Thoth reported whenever the weight of a deceased heart is exactly even with the feather it is weighed against. This brings everything back to the title that was bestowed upon him. The concept of Ma'at does not end there. Balance between the forces of good and evil is also looked after by Thoth. In these cases, his duty as a mediator surfaces.



To start everything off, Thoth would be a Mage in this theorycraft. Kicking off the kit, Thoth plays upon his role as the 'Scribe of the Gods'. In his Passive, Thoth possesses the scribes containing knowledge on his enemies. He chooses up to three enemies at the start of the game. After making his decision, he now has awareness on the enemies' weaknesses. Using this to his advantage, he now deals more damage to them with his abilities. In a 5v5 situation, Thoth should



| Name               | Icon                                                                                | Type      | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Scribe of the Gods |    | Passive   | Thoth has in his possession the scribes of knowledge. At the beginning of the game, Thoth will choose up to 3 enemies to gain knowledge about. These enemies will take additional damage from Thoth's abilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Acquire Knowledge  |    | Ability 1 | Thoth deals damage on a ground target. If the chosen enemy is in the centre of the ability when casted, Thoth gains a stack of knowledge on that god (up to 3 stacks) and removes a small amount of their protections for a short time.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Recite Knowledge   |   | Ability 2 | Thoth summons a burst of magical energy in a line in front of him and deals damage. If Thoth has knowledge on that enemy, the effect of this ability lasts longer. The enemy will continue to take damage for the duration, and proportional to the amount of knowledge Thoth has on that enemy. Knowledge is consumed.                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| The Great Mediator |  | Ability 3 | Thoth was well known for being an arbitrator or mediator. On the battlefield, Thoth can settle disputes between himself and his enemies by activating this ability on an enemy in a cone in front of him. Enemies will be convinced by Thoth's words and will be knocked back. If Thoth has knowledge on the enemy, they will be knocked back further, proportional to the amount of knowledge Thoth has on that enemy. Knowledge is consumed.                                                                                    |
| Pass the Knowledge |  | Ultimate  | Thoth passes on his knowledge to his allies. He goes up to the sky and aims his scrolls on the ground covering a large area. Both an ally and enemy must be in the area for the ability to work. The ally hit will deal additional damage to any enemies hit by Pass the Knowledge. If more than one ally is hit, the ally with the lower maximum health will gain the buff. At this great height, enemies in an area around Thoth will also be revealed to him. This effect continues on for a short duration after Thoth lands. |





Artwork by Michele Trocchia



MT



aim to use his Passive against damage dealers on the opposing team. Hunters, Assassins and Mages all fall into this category. This would allow him to take them out of fights a lot quicker. At the same time, high damage outputs tend to originate from squishier targets. This further improves Thoth's chances of getting the kill before getting killed.



During his time in Ancient Egypt, Thoth was said to have knowledge in all matters. This included science, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, geometry and every other branch imaginable. It would make sense that all of this knowledge was acquired throughout his lifetime and this leads to his first ability, Acquire Knowledge.

Thoth deals damage on a ground target. Any enemies hit receive damage. To gain the full potential of this ability, the placement of the ability has to fulfill two conditions. First, the enemy hit must be one of the three chosen from his Passive. Second, the enemy must be in the centre of the ability when it is casted. This mechanic would be similar to Poseidon's Release the Kraken where the enemy will receive maximum damage when they are in the centre of the casted ability. If these two conditions are met, Thoth gains a stack of Knowledge (up to three stacks) on the god hit by Acquire Knowledge. He then proceeds to write them down on a scribe. At the maximum point, Thoth would have a total of nine scribes, three for each of the chosen gods. The enemy will also have a small portion of their protections removed for a short period. Precise aiming comes to play here in order for Thoth to build up his knowledge. They can then be used to enhance his other abilities.



After gaining all this knowledge and writing them down on his scribes, Thoth then proceeds to his second ability, Recite Knowledge.

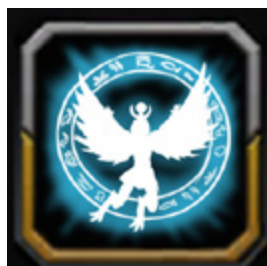
Thoth was also wise in the ways of magic and he shows his capabilities here. Thoth summons magical energy in a line in front of him that deals damage. Having the scribe containing Knowledge on that god would make the effect longer lasting since Thoth is aware of his or her weaknesses. After getting hit by the ability, the enemy continues to receive damage. The duration of this effect would be proportional to the amount of Knowledge Thoth acquired from that god. When used together with Acquire Knowledge, this combo becomes his main method of breaking down his enemies to get the kill. The concept here would be to build up as much knowledge possible on the god and use this to your advantage when blasting them with the magical spell.



As mentioned before, Thoth was also involved in arbitrating or mediating. On the battleground, Thoth once again turns the tide in his favour. Being chased or attacked by an enemy is a situation that Thoth would prefer to avoid. He would then talk himself out of the situation by activating his third ability, The Great Mediator. Thoth faces his enemy and, in a cone in front of him, he negotiates with his enemy to stop attacking him. In agreement with Thoth's words, the enemy would leave him alone in the form of getting knocked back. Having knowledge on the enemy is beneficial when using this ability as well. The more knowledge Thoth has on that enemy, the further they will be knocked back. Whenever Thoth is in a bad position be it in lane or in a teamfight, putting distance between himself and the enemy may be the difference between life and death.



Escaping from a chase also becomes possible and the chances of coming out of the chase alive can be increased by always having knowledge on the enemy.



After gaining knowledge, Thoth then begins to share them with his teammates through his Ultimate, Pass the Knowledge.

During a point in Thoth's history, he was also considered a moon god. He puts on this hat and takes to the sky using the gravitational pull of the moon. Once in the air, Thoth can aim his scrolls at a great distance. A large targeter would appear on the ground for Thoth to accomplish this. However, the targeting system must work a little differently to successfully activate the ability - both an ally and an enemy must be within the targeter. Once the scribe containing the knowledge has been passed on to the targeted ally, he or she will now deal additional damage to any targeted enemies. If more than one ally is hit by the Ultimate, the ally with the lower maximum health will receive the buff. This ability would now require Thoth to be conscious of his teammates. If a teammate needs just a little more power to defeat their lane enemy, take to the sky. On the other hand, if a teammate is having a hard time against their lane enemy, take to the sky.

Since he is a Mage, Thoth should place the opposing mid laner (only in Conquest) under his Passive simply because it would allow Thoth to have an upper hand over the enemy through the higher damage output. During the laning phase, Thoth would need to concentrate on building up his knowledge on the enemy god. Constant poking with Acquire Knowledge allows Thoth to deal damage as well as increasing the potency of Recite Knowledge.

**“IN TEAMFIGHTS, THOTH WOULD BE EVEN DEADLIER THAN HE ALREADY IS. HE WOULD BE IN THE VICINITY OF ALL HIS CHOSEN ENEMIES AND EACH ONE OF THEM WOULD RECEIVE MORE DAMAGE FROM HIS AREA BASED ABILITIES DUE TO HIS PASSIVE.”**

In teamfights, Thoth would be even deadlier than he already is. He would be in the vicinity of all his chosen enemies and each one of them would receive more damage from his area based abilities due to his Passive. When used aggressively, The Great Mediator also allows Thoth to place his enemies in dangerous positions. One such way would be arriving to the teamfight from behind the enemies and knocking them back toward your teammates. His Ultimate then ties everything up. One of his allies would deal even more damage to enemies. Since the targeter would be large, getting all five enemies within the area is definitely possible. Look to aim the Ultimate on high damage output allies. This is also simplified by the fact that the lower maximum health allies would be chosen if more than one ally is targeted. In this case, a Hunter would be chosen over a Guardian if both were to be in the vicinity of the ability.

This concludes another god concept in the vaults of In Theory! In the case of Thoth, knowledge is most definitely power, a lot of it!

*Article by Timothy Tian*

*Artwork by Michele Trocchia*





Artwork by Michele Trocchia





# VALISBLOT

By Jacob Crawford

I am Cupid, god of attraction and erotic love--hunter of hearts, slayer of gods.

It's raining on Mount Olympus, and the rain smells sickly like metal. I wake up face-down in a puddle of mud. I roll onto my back and sit up against an outer turret. A gash carves through the ligaments in my left hand; I can't move my fingers. They are swollen and gruesome: purple puddings caked with dirt and black blood. My right shoulder screams. What happened here? Where is everyone?

I lean my head against the turret. The sun smiles dumbly, and the warm, red water washes my cherubim face. No. Not water. I taste it, and it tastes

like blood. I remember now: blood rains on Mount Olympus. It's Valisblot--the Norse holiday for love and feasting, but there is no love on the battleground this day. I did this, all of this. I close my eyes and listen, and the sun tightens and drougths the bloody rivers in my cheeks. Silence. I feel nothing; I regret nothing.

At 27 minutes, the Vesuvians forced a teamfight near our outer mid-lane tower. Father [Ares] and I had toppled the enemy outer tower some seven or eight minutes prior, and we had just secured an unopposed Gold Fury kill. The Vesuvians ambushed us as we crossed for Fire Giant: we had no wards. Bellona rallied on Mother [Aphrodite], and Thor collapsed upon her, crushing her. Loki filleted Ratatoskr, and





Artwork by Bluanka





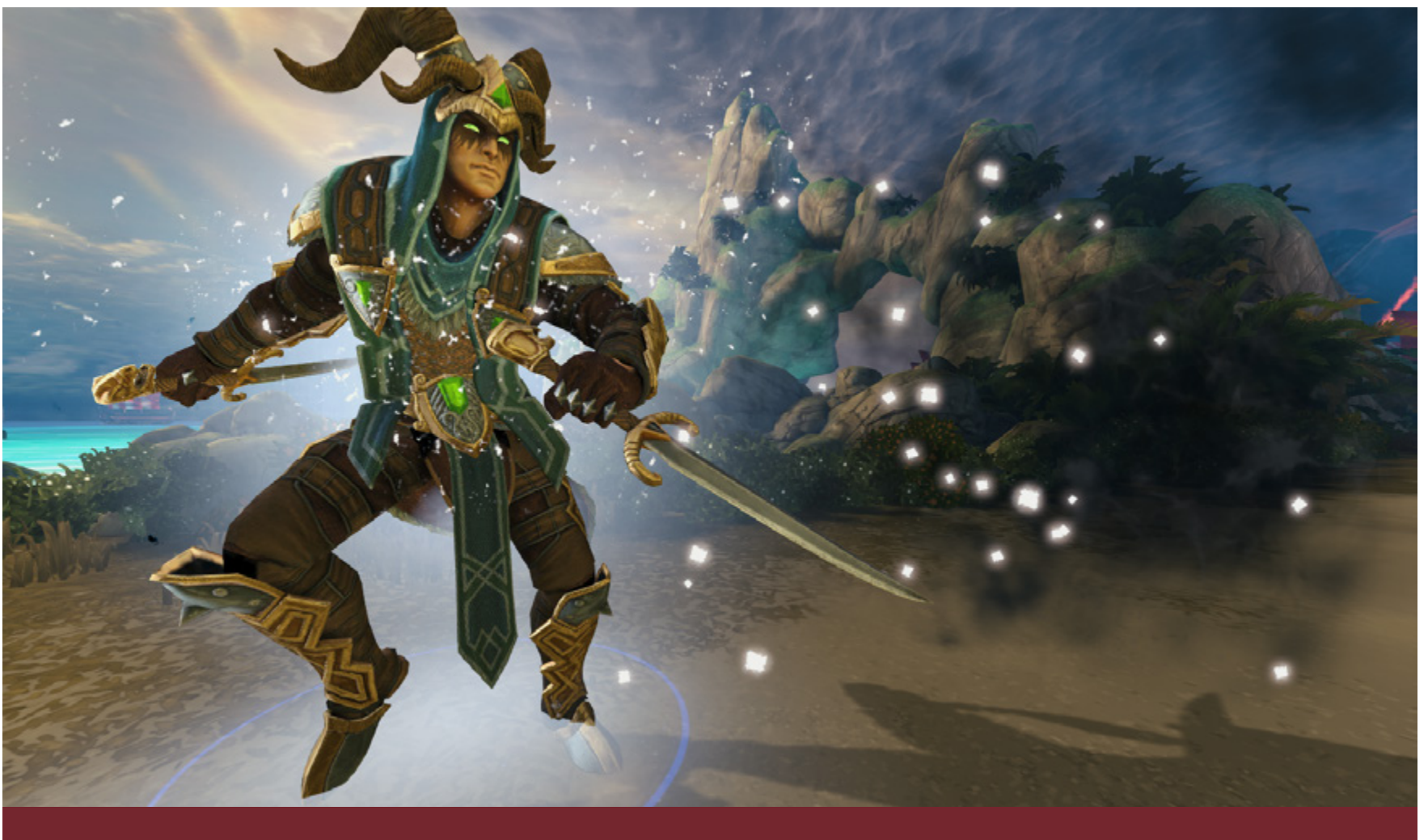
Janus sniped Hades. Father attempted to chain Loki, but it was too little, too late. Thor rooted him, and Loki slit his throat from behind, leaving me alone.

Anhur buried a spear into my right shoulder, pinning me to the turret. I screamed and dropped my

bow. Color drained from the battlefield, and my ears popped. The tips of my extremities went numb, and I became suddenly aware of the stifling humidity. I was going into shock. A warmth radiated from my right shoulder into my chest, and short electric spasms crept down my right forearm and into my hand. I was dying, and my body was beginning to shut down. *Happy Valisblot, god of love.* The irony of my death seemed almost poetic. I managed a smile as the lane narrowed into a long, bright, and shrinking corridor.

No. This was not the end for me. Not now, not this way. I shook away the warmth and pawed at the spear. I couldn't reach the handle, so I reached for the blade. It dug into my fingers as I removed the tip. I dropped the spear and examined my hand. Useless: a gory mess of flesh and tendons. But I did not need to grip my bow to fire it; I merely needed to claw my hand around it.

The human body holds five and a half liters





of blood. When they lose a fifth of that, they pass out from shock. My body holds much less blood than a human, given its size, and my shoulder was hemorrhaging. My time was short, and I needed to act fast. I could not lift my right arm to draw, so I aimed from the hip. I loaded an arrow. Luckily, Anhur had hesitated. He was taunting me. I loaded an arrow into his mouth, and it thudded through the back of his skull. Then I dropped a volley into his chest. He fell forward onto the arrows, and they crunched beneath him.

Loki moved toward me, twirling knives. I unloaded two shots into his leg, rooting him. He camouflaged, but I unloaded three arrows at him anyway. The bolts appeared to strike nothing, halting in mid-air. The trickster god reappeared transfixed, coughing blood--an arrow lodged in his throat.

"How?" he choked. I said nothing and shot him between the horns. For Father.

Bellona raised her warhammer, and I shot a hole through her bicep. She screamed, dropped her weapon, and clawed at the arrow. Then I loaded another arrow into her hand. She snapped the tip, and withdrew the shaft. She spit at the ground.

"Another," she said. "I want you to do it." She drew her sword, and I pushed an arrow through each shoulder. She roared and charged. I unloaded a volley into her stomach and chest. Each arrow thudded as it struck and pierced her armor. She hobbled, slightly. "Is that it?" she yelled, and she swung the sword overhead. She screamed again

as she lunged forward. I shot again, this time piercing her temple. Her lunge missed far to the right, and she crashed limp against the tower.

Janus opened a portal to flee lane. As it closed, I released a single arrow. It struck him in the back of the head. So much for the sniper.

Thor backed away. I sensed fear. "Cupid!" he said. "You're a god of love! It's Valisblot! You can't--you wouldn't!" I covered him in a field of hearts, and he threw Mjolnir to escape.

"Happy Valisblot." I said. "See you in Hel." And I shot him once more through the chest. He crashed into the ground, and Mjolnir thumped in the dirt. For Mother.



*By Jacob Crawford*



# Forest Spirit CHIRON



Artwork by Holly Webster





# GameOn

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# THE SEASON 2 JOURNEY OF EPSILON ESPORTS

~~~~~ By Zachary McFarland ~~~~



A Cinderella story is always great to watch. The SMITE team Epsilon eSports had such a story. The team was full of all-stars and then failed to qualify at the start of the SPL. They would then dominate the Challenger Cup and make waves in the Pro League and end the season as SMITE world champions.

After a disappointing performance at the European Regionals of Season 1, iRaffer decided that he wanted to make his own team to compete with in SMITE's second season. His vision was to craft a team out of the five best mechanical players he could find and mold them into a unit. iRaffer himself moved out of the jungle role and took up support.

For the rest of his super team, iRaffer picked up Emilito0 for hunter, Optixx as mid, Adapting in the jungle, and NinjaDimi for the solo lane.

Emilitoo and Optixx had played on multiple competitive SMITE teams over the years and are both known for being able to play several roles at a high level. Adapting jungled for Suntouch's team, Potato Boys, in Season 1's Challenger Cup. NinjaDimi was a ranked star that all the pro players knew and praised. This team would come to be known as Panthera and had ambitions for the SMITE Pro League.

The SPL Spring Qualifiers was the event that determined which teams entered the Pro League. There were four spots available from the Qualifiers. They were held over three weeks. The first two weeks consisted of two open bracket tournaments where teams received points for their placements, earning more points the higher they placed. The eight teams with the highest points moved on

to the third week where teams were broken into two groups of four and played a series of round robin games. Each team faced the others in their group once. The top two teams from each group would advance to the SMITE Pro League.

Panthera easily made it into the third round, making the finals in both weeks of open bracket. Their group consisted of Team Dignitas, London Conspiracy, and Wasted Talent. Dignitas ran the group, going 3-0 while Wasted Talent didn't win a single game, ending up 0-3. The pivotal match in the group was between Panthera and London Conspiracy. One team goes to the SPL, the other down to the Challenger Cup. London Conspiracy managed to beat Panthera and send iRaffer's super team to the amateur league. Optixx then left the team and Yammyn was picked as a replacement.

The Spring Challenger Cup was a weekly series of seven open bracket tournaments where teams





acquired points based on their placement each week. The top four teams were invited to the Summer Qualifiers while the fifth and sixth place teams also had potential to be invited. During the Challenger Cup, Panthera was sponsored by Epsilon eSports. The organization put a lot of faith into the squad making it into the SPL in the summer. iRaffer's team won every single week of Challengers, not dropping a single set. This put them in prime position for the Summer Qualifiers.

Summer Qualifiers were both a relegation and expansion event. The SMITE Pro league was being expanded from six to eight teams and the bottom performers from the Spring Split had to fight to maintain their spot. Each set was a best of 5, where a team needed to win 3 games to secure themselves into the SPL. Epsilon's opponents were the fourth place Challenger team, Da Bronkos. Epsilon defeated the German squad 3-0 and became participants in the SMITE Pro League because of it.

During the Summer Split of the SPL, each team faced the other once in a Best of 2 set over seven weeks. The top three teams advanced to the Summer Finals LAN. Epsilon came out swinging, beating or tying teams for the first four weeks. iRaffer got banned for two weeks for harassment in the middle of the split, causing Epsilon to lose to Titan in week 5 and then tie with TheNightsWatch, a bottom team, in week 6. Epsilon found themselves in a tiebreaker for fourth place with London Conspiracy. They won the matchup this time but still just missed LAN.

Epsilon came into the Fall Split with a vengeance, scorned that they were unable to



make LAN. At this point, the squad was seen as probably the best in Europe, if not the world. This split, Epsilon proved it. Teams played 28 games over 10 weeks. Epsilon won 27 of them, only dropping a single game to their scrim partner, Fnatic.

An Epsilon member won MVP in five of the Fall Split weeks, a full half of the Split. Four of the weekly MVPs were obtained by Adapting who was the best jungler in Europe and challenged C9's Andister for best player in the world. At the end of the split, every member of Epsilon won MVP for their role with NinjaDimi, who renamed himself to Dimi, achieving an astounding 17.4 KDA, brought on by the fact that he had the least deaths in the entire SPL and was even nicknamed Dimi the Undying. Adapting and Emilitoo took first and second place in terms of total kills in Europe over the split.

The Super Regionals were the last step between Epsilon and the SMITE World Championship. As first seed, the squad would be able to start at the

Semifinals. They beat long-time nemesis London Conspiracy 3-0, finally exacting revenge from getting locked out of the Spring SPL. Epsilon then fought against Paradigm. The two managed to make the set last all five games and in the end, Paradigm won 3-2, making Epsilon the second place team at the event.

Epsilon eSports went into the SMITE World Championships as the European second seed. They ran through their opponents in classic Epsilon style, not dropping a game until their semifinal match versus Cloud 9. A series many people thought would be the finals, the set lasted the full five games and resulted in Epsilon standing victorious. The last team standing between Epsilon and the title of world champions was Enemy eSports. Epsilon swept the set, winning in a convincing 3-0. iRaffer built a team out of players he saw as individually amazing, made them act as a team, and won the SWC.

By Zachary McFarland



Artwork by Maria Manrique Ccopa



STAFF QNA: JACOB CRAWFORD

~~~~~ By Jorg van der Velden ~~~~~

*This month we're shining a spotlight on one of the most productive writers in our team, not only providing content but also giving some of the best feedback during proofing, ensuring that our articles are always of the best quality possible! I present to you: Jacob 'JakeTheDog' Crawford!*

**As always, let's shoot out the predictable questions first: how did you get into SMITE?**

I started playing SMITE in late 2014. I was writing freelance for a gaming website, and I was the resident MOBA/eSports guru. They asked me to cover the game for a column. I tried it, and instantly fell in love with it.

But it wasn't the 3rd person point-of-view or the MMORPG-esque control scheme that hooked me; it was the community. Even in October/November 2014, SMITE had gained a cult following,



and the community amazed me. From Hi-Rez to pros to Redditors, everyone in the SMITE ecosystem was and is dear to me--they all ROCK!

### **What was it about the game that kept you playing for so long?**

To be honest, when I first started playing the game, I played on an old HP Inspiron laptop at less than 10fps. For over a year and a half, I played on that damned thing. It sucked. Creep farming was out, so I mostly supported--and my computer couldn't handle more than three gods on the screen at a time. Late game team fights were a nightmare. The road to level 30 has been arduous, to say the least.

In the latter half of 2015, I finally saved up enough money to build a top-notch gaming/studio computer. Since, I have been destroying my lanes and winning team fights. I boast a 76% win rate with Medusa.

Whenever people lag, I laugh. They merely adopted lag: I was born in it, molded by it. I didn't play at 60 frames per second until I was level 23, and by then I had already mastered nine gods.

...corny, right? I've been waiting to use that line for a long time.

### **Which god(dess) is your favorite and why?**

I go back and forth. For a long time (when I only played at mind-numbingly low framerates), I preferred Ares. His ultimate in low-level queues feels better than--well--it feels good. Really good.

Lately, however, I have gravitated towards Hunters. Medusa's kit is a ton of fun. I love stacking Hastened Fatalis with her passive and wreaking havoc. I also enjoy playing Cupid. Combining stacks with his ultimate feels like cheating sometimes. He's the Teemo of SMITE, and I love him.

### **Last one of the painfully obvious: What is your favorite game mode and, of course, why?**

You think I'm going to answer Conquest because I'm the eSports guy, right? You're Wrong.

Joust is my favorite mode. The Joust revamp has reinvigorated SMITE for me. It is, perhaps, the most entertaining multiplayer map since Halo's Blood Gulch. The jungle camps are perfectly spaced, forcing team fights at every turn. The Bull Demon King (inspired by Journey to the West--read it!) forces teams to fight in-lane, rather than wait beneath towers for tactical mistakes. I love it.







How's that for a Shayamalan-esque plot twist?

### **How did you end up at the SMITE Official Magazine?**

Again, I was freelancing as an eSports journalist for a spattering of websites. One asked me to cover the 2015 SMITE World Championship. While in Atlanta, I met Kris (the former SMITE community manager--he still doesn't remember meeting me) and Tanner (aka IgnorantSloth). We hit it off, and Tanner asked me to apply for the magazine. A month later, I was writing features for SMITE Mag. I have been a regular writer ever since.

### **What are the things about working for the magazine that you like?**

To be frank, I love working with others. The collaborative energy at SMITE magazine is infectious. It's truly special. I mean--look at how much it has grown! We started as a





small community magazine. Since, we have been adopted by Hi-Rez, our former lead editor has been hired as the SMITE community manager--and has since been promoted to Paladins community manager, and our articles, art, and screencaps are regular features for SMITEgame.com. And I blame the staff's infectious enthusiasm. I have seen nothing like it anywhere else, and it's why I continue to produce creative material here for free.

**Are there any challenges with working for the mag and, if so, how do you overcome them?**

I started graduate school about eight months ago, and it has put a lot of strain on me--both as a writer and an editor. I run a local Shakespeare company, so that, too, gets in the way of my writing. But I do my best to meet deadlines, and, though short, I hope my pieces are entertaining.

**As for writing in general, what would you tell people who ask for advice?**

I hear this question from my students a lot. Several of them want to make it as writers. My best advice: KEEP WRITING. Writing is a trade--like blacksmithing or cobbling--and you must become an apprentice before you can declare yourself a journeyman or a master. Write all the time; practice. Pick up a community magazine job like









this one, and give it your best shot. Blog. Write in a diary. Write an opinion column for a newspaper. Do all of the above. Just make sure you're writing. I have a saying: every day I don't write something, I'm not a writer. I believe that, wholeheartedly.

As for criticism--I have heard a lot of hooplah and mumbo jumbo about growing and cultivating one's 'writing spirit.' Reddit's /r/writing is full of this nonsense. The truth: grow thick skin. Writing is not for the low-esteemed; people (editors, trolls, other writers) will tear your work to pieces. I have a gigabyte of rejection mail in my mailbox. But those rejections make me stronger. Harsh editors are my favorite editors because I learn something from them--even if that something is not to be

a complete tool. Stephen King used to save his rejection slips; he used to pin them to his walls like badges of honor. I feel much the same.

And READ. Read a book. Read a blog. Read the newspaper. Read Reddit. Read SMITE Mag. Read anything and everything, and read it out loud. If you want to write, you need to read: learn about yourself by reading the works of others.

### **Any shoutouts?**

Shout outs to Kris, Tanner, Jorg, and everyone else at the mag. I love you guys very much; you are each extremely dear to me--though I have not met many of you in-person.

*By Jorg van der Velden*







# THE MULTIPLAYER IN MOBA

By Jorg van der Velden

*It's no surprise to any of you when I say that SMITE is a social game. Hell, it's in the very name of the genre. It's one of the many reasons why the game is so compelling, as we humans are incredibly social creatures. But there are some incredible stories out there that are far beyond what you'd expect from playing a game, and I wanted to share mine.*

## FRIENDS

My friends were nowhere near as interested in SMITE as I was, which resulted in a lot of time spent solo queuing - or as I now refer to it 'trollo queuing' - and turned the game into a lonely experience for me. I liked the game though, and since this was my first MOBA I wasn't as bothered by the lack of comradery (old school RPG player by heart). I did come across a lot of the MOBA Community

horror stories from LoL, so I used the mute button a lot to maintain my enjoyment of the game.

That doesn't mean I didn't play a couple of games party'd up with others, but those never really stuck. Not until I met a guy from Jordan. It wasn't so much that I stuck with him, he stuck with me. Every time I got online, he was there ready with a party invite. Within no-time we had a small little group that played on a daily basis.

This is when I finally found the true joy of MOBAs: the people. Sure, there's a whole bunch of salt out there, but I'm convinced that that's just the result of tempers and misplaced frustration. And playing with friends helps you deal with that easily.

So far, this is a story I think most of you are familiar with to some degree. Playing with and



making friends is an essential part of games like SMITE and, like I said in the introduction, is one of the reasons why the game is so compelling.

## A COMMON SHADOW

Where my story takes a turn away from some of you is the point that I'm very susceptible to depression. I wish I could say that it turns away from most of you, but sadly it's one of the most common afflictions in the world and we, the gaming community as a whole, are no exception to that. But I digress. About three years ago I lost nearly everything: my job, my home and most of my social life. Not surprisingly, that black shadow called depression appeared and clung to me for dear life.

The group of friends I made in SMITE, especially a German programmer, helped me hold on to my dwindling sanity, stopping me from disappearing inside that shadow completely. They were a point of contact in reality for me, someone I could talk to, have fun with and forget reality for a second. Hearing the German programmer talk not only about the game but also about his wife and kids gave me that spark of hope I needed to crawl back out of that shadow. Saying that they saved my life would be an overstatement, but they did help me get through one of the worst periods of my life and it would have been a lot worse without them.

## A DIFFERENT SITUATION

My story with the people of SMITE doesn't stop there. You could actually say that this







is where it starts! Because almost two years ago I joined the SMITE Community Magazine, this very magazine before Hi-Rez started to officially support it, as a writer. Within an instant there was this huge group of people I was part of that enjoyed the game, that wanted to contribute to the community and loved to be creative. For the first time in a very long while I didn't feel like a burden. I finally felt valuable again, I felt like I was contributing to something worth pouring effort in. And so I did.

The effort I put in really paid off. It was amazing to see the Magazine grow, not only in readers but also in design and overall quality. It also resulted in me growing within the magazine, rising to Production Manager and eventually to Editor. I actually changed my career goals because of this, aspiring to become a professional games journalist. This wouldn't have been the case without everyone who works at the Magazine, who supported me and helped me grow, whether they are aware of it or not.

All of them became valued coworkers and some have become important friends as well. While they're spread out over the world, they're as near and dear to me as my real life friends. One in particular has become extremely important to me.

## A CHANGING LIFE

I'm moving to Switzerland later this year because of her. Yes, I met my fiance because I play SMITE, and changing my



entire life as a result. I wouldn't have this bright of a future if I never started playing this simple piece of entertainment called SMITE. It has dragged me through the darkest times of my life, it has given me a future not only career wise, but also in love. Writing it all out like this makes it feel like a corny romantic comedy, but it's the way it is.



So whenever someone tells you it's just a game, they're both right and wrong at the same time. SMITE is an incredibly powerful social medium, bringing people together from all over the world in varying degrees while it's still just a game meant to entertain you and waste your time on. While I might be an extreme case, the potential for SMITE to be life altering is there for everyone. And not just for those who can make a livelihood out of it through content creation. The friends, and for some family, we make through this game are irreplaceable and an essential part of our lives. So while playing, remember it's just a game, but the people you play with are real and can become a part of you in surprising ways.

*By Jorg van der Velden*







# HISTORY OF THE HINDUS

By Helena Wachhaus

The first depictions of what are now known as the Hindu gods were carvings done by the Indus around 2500 BC. The Indus were surprisingly advanced for a pre-historical civilization: they developed bathhouses, public and private wells, drainage systems, wide streets, and at times, had cities that could support about 50,000 people. The Indus even had their own written language, but archeologists have so far been unable to decode the glyphs. This is mostly due to the fact that very few examples of the Indus glyphs have survived more than 4500 years. This means that archaeologists are still unsure of what the first gods were called and if those names have changed throughout the years. Still, the similarities between the gods of the Indus and the later Vedic era gods, is unquestionable. When the Indo-Europeans arrived in the Indus River Valley,

around 1500 BC, the two cultures meshed and the Hindu pantheon as we know it came into being.

The Persians, one of the groups of Indo-Europeans, conquered part of the Indus civilization. Some archeologists speculate that the Persians, a previously nomadic group, conquered some of the Indus civilization due to an increasingly diminishing food supply. Others argue that the Persians were responding to a rumor of the Indus civilization's weakness; while most other civilizations were in the Bronze Age, the Persians heard that the Indus were stuck in a dark age and were easy pickings. Regardless of their reasons for conquering the Indus, the Persians controlled an area of immense fertility and were able to keep control for a ridiculous amount of time - approximately from 550 BC to 334



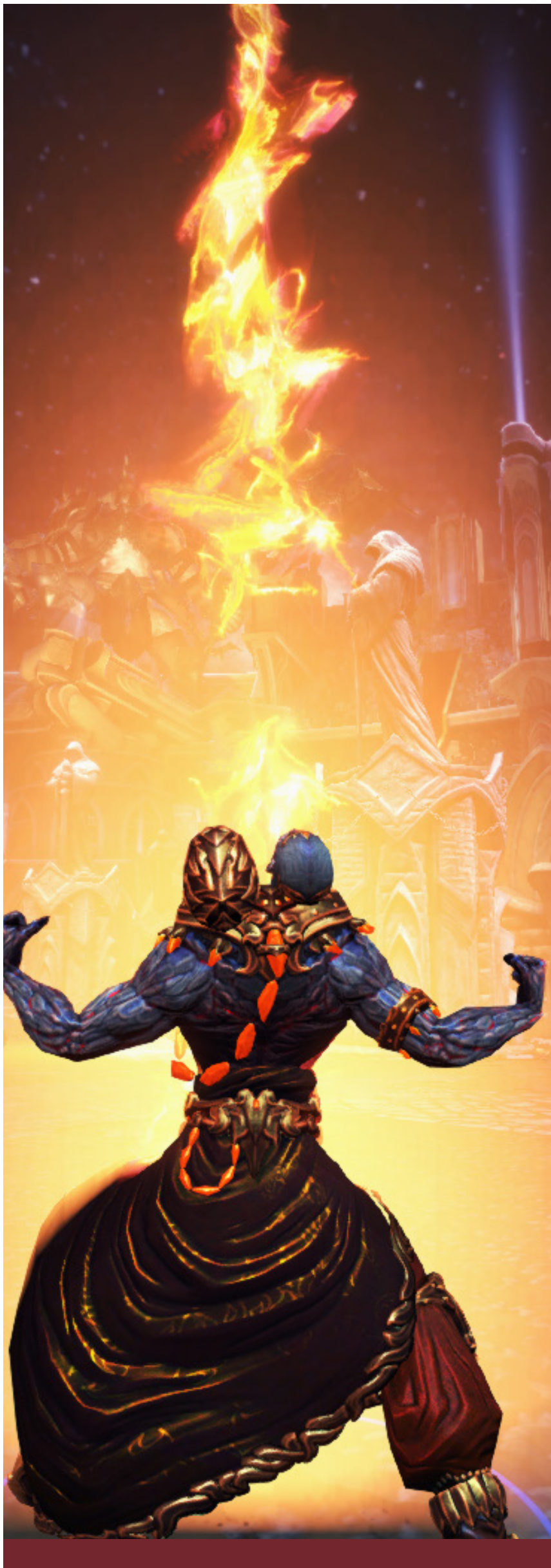
BC. Despite making the Indus people pay tribute, the Persians didn't try to assimilate their new subjects. King Cyrus, a Persian who managed to conquer most of West Asia, allowed his subjects to keep their languages and religions and still managed to unify his people. With part of the Indus River Valley annexed into the Persian empire, the Vedics - the rest of the Indus and Indo-Europeans in the valley - also began to expand and form their own empire.

Unlike a lot of other ancient societies, the Vedic Hindus didn't really have a structured pantheon. Depending on the era, different gods would be favored more heavily than the others. Three of the most powerful gods include Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. These three became known as the Trimurti and are the most popular of the Vedic gods. Despite his destructive nature, Shiva was never seen as a villain. This is because the Hindu's saw death and destruction

as a necessary part of life. They even thought that by meditating and praying to certain gods of death and destruction, you could gain insights into the unpredictable and sudden nature of death and learn to accept it. This makes the Hindus fairly unique among the ancient societies, because their myths don't really tell of an end to the gods or the world - I'm looking at you Ragnarok. The cyclical nature of their world is part of the reason why reincarnation became such a popular idea among the Hindu people, though it did fall from popularity due to a mass emotional weariness. Living just one life is taxing enough, but continuously being trapped in the world of the living can be, understandably, tiring. It makes sense that people would begin to look for ways to break out of the cycle. Their answer was to learn to be free from the aspects of the world that dealt with the body and meditate. Meditating on certain gods or stories could aid in this process.







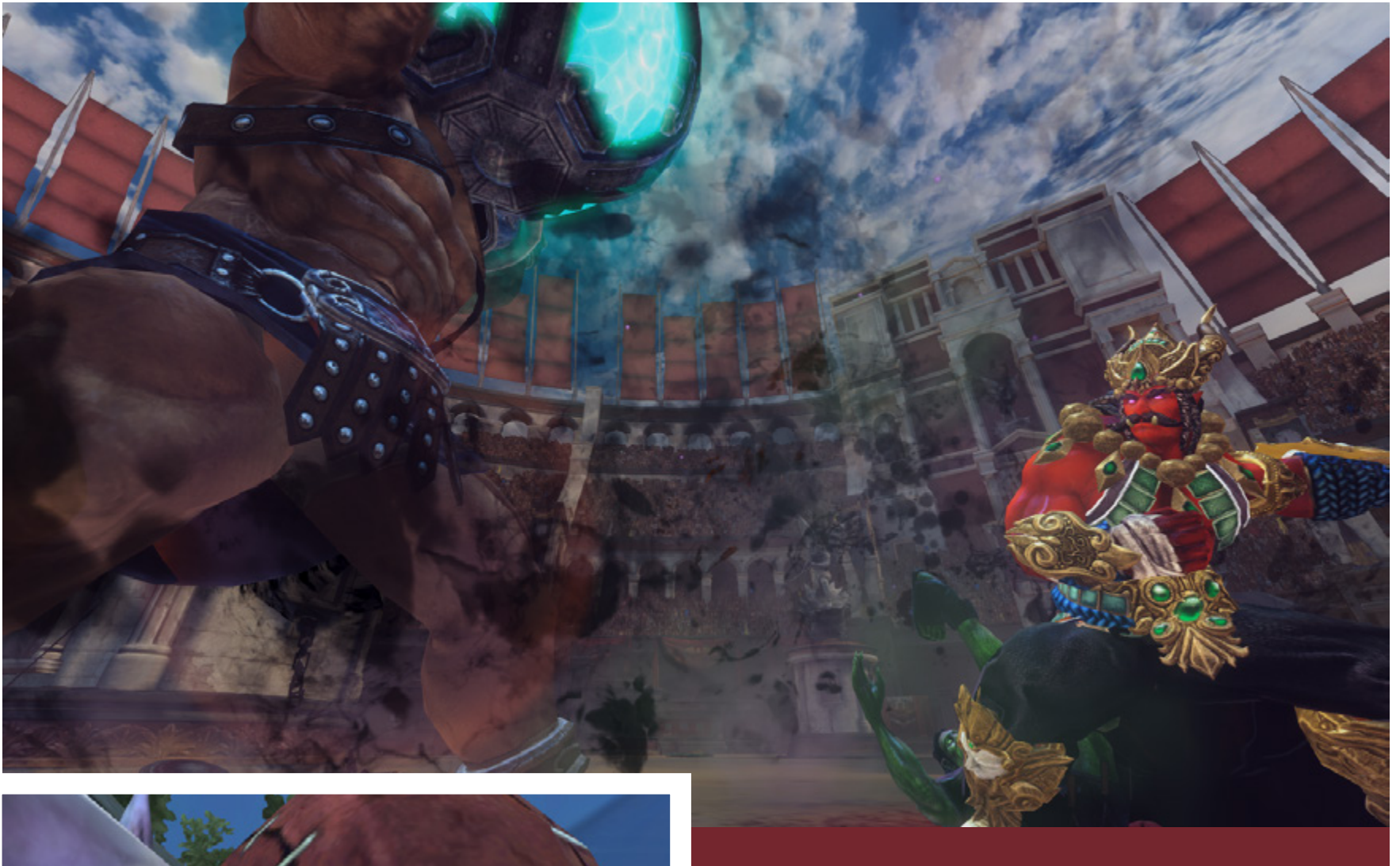
There are three major books that were written by the ancient Hindu, the Rig Veda, Ramayana, and the Mahabharata. The Rig Veda was a long poem that told the story of how the world was created. As the name of the second book suggests, the Ramayana focuses on the tales of Rama, one of Vishnu's incarnations, and his victory over the demon Ravana. Finally, the Mahabharata is a collection of stories focusing on the battle between cousins. One family consisted of five good brothers and the other was a host of one hundred bad brothers. In true mythological tradition, the five brothers, along with some of their god friends, defeated their cousins and ruled the cities of the upper Ganges and Jumna rivers. The Mahabharata is also the book that contains the Bhagavad Gita and one of the earliest known versions of the Cinderella story.

The version of Cinderella contained in the Mahabharata is surprisingly Disney-esque and, unsurprisingly, doesn't involve characters strategically removing parts of their feet or getting their eyes pecked out by crows. The story begins with a mother being forced to abandon her baby in the woods, and the child, Shakuntala, is brought up by birds. A respectable number of years later, the King of the land decided to go hunting; he tracked down a deer and shot it. Imagine his surprise when he finds the body of the deer being mourned by a beautiful woman! The king immediately begs the Shakuntala's forgiveness for killing her pet deer and asks her to marry him. When she tearfully agrees, he gives her the ring off his finger and they rejoice in the woods -take that to mean what you will. The king realizes that he has neglected his kingly duties and can't drop the affairs of state to marry this girl that he met in the woods, so he leaves, promising to send for Shakuntala as soon as he can. After finally meeting another human being, Shakuntala is left alone again,









waiting for her love to come get her so they can get married, and she doesn't wait well. This is the part where the story that gets a bit vague, so bear with me. Shakuntala comes across a magician and is extremely rude to him, so he curses her. It's not really said what she did to deserve to be cursed, but the magician makes it so that the first person that she dreams about at night, her finance, will forget her. For some reason, the magician has a change of heart and amends his curse so that it will be lifted when the king sees his ring again.

When her beloved king doesn't send for her, Shakuntala sets out to find him. She doesn't know about the curse, so she notices that her ring is gone from her hand - some versions say that she loses it while others say that it falls into a stream. Shakuntala makes it to the palace and even manages to get an audience with the King, but he doesn't remember her. Disheartened, Shakuntala returns to the woods and raises their son by herself. Like all good story





rings, the king's promise ring ends up being eaten by a fish and found by a fisherman; who, recognizing the king's seal, returns it to him. The curse is broken, the king rushes off to find his beloved, and after some groveling, they live happily ever after.

As strange and as anticlimactic as that story is, it does coincide with a few of the later myths. There is a strong connection between Shakuntala and Sita, the wife of Rama whose story is told in the Ramayana. Both women were abandoned by their husbands and resolutely decide to raise their children alone. Unfortunately for Sita, Rama doesn't beg her forgiveness and her story doesn't have the same happy ending that Shakuntala's does, but both women possess an inner strength that is strangely absent from a lot of the myths and folklore that have followed them. The differences between Shakuntala's story and the one used in the Brother's

Grimm or the Disney film are immeasurable -one of the only similarities being the birds.

This is really impressive when you consider how much time Hindu mythology has survived. Some of their stories are literally older than the written word. Hindu mythology shows their focus on the circular, repetition of time. The Hindu gods, such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, show us that the Hindus set forth a repeating motion of creation of life, life preservation and life's destruction. This can be interpreted to follow reincarnation principles, but it can also show that each life takes on its unique creation story and that all lives are interconnected. This universal quality may well be one reason why the Hindus continue to thrive, grow and evolve. Its circular life lives on in the people who continue to tell the stories and follow in the footsteps of their ancestors.

*By Helena Wachhaus*



### Sources

*If this introduction into Hindu mythology has piqued your interest, these sources will allow you to dig further into its fascinating history:*

- History of India
- Harappa and the Indus
- Indus
- Early Hinduism
- Evolution of Religion
- Indian Mythology
- The Ramayana
- The Mahabharata
- The Vedic Era
- The Persian Empire
- Alexander the Great
- Famous Women in Hinduism



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**clap your... oh.**

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